

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 EB-07 CAB-02 CIAE-00 COME-00
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INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN
AMEMBASSY BANGUI
AMEMBASSY COTONOU
AMEMBASSY DAKAR
AMEMBASSY LAGOS
AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE
RUEHCR /AMEMBASSY LOME 2310
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MONROVIA
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU
AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L NIAMEY 5633

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EAIR, NG
SUBJ: AIR AFRIQUE

REF: STATE 285700(NOTAL)

1. DESPITE OCCASIONAL GRUMBLINGS ABOUT HIGH PASSENGER
TARIFFS, EXCESSIVE FLIGHT RATES, AND ERRATIC CHANGES
IN FLIGHT SCHEDULING, NIGER HAS FEW BASIC DIFFERENCES
WITH AIR AFRIQUE.

2. LOCAL CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITIES REGARD INTERNATIONAL
AVIATION AS CRITICAL TO LAND-LOCKED NIGER. NIAMEY AIRPORT
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IS NOW FIRST STOP/LAST CALL FOR MOST AIR AFRIQUE/UTA FLIGHTS
TRANSITTING THE SAHARA. AS RESULT, NIGER RANKS FOURTH
IN AIR TRAFFIC FLOW AMONG AIR AFRIQUE MEMBERS. TO
EXTENT THAT NIGER WISHES TO REMAIN CROSSROADS OF NORTH-
SOUTH TRAFFIC, AIR AFRIQUE HERE REGARDED MORE IMPORTANT
TO NIGER THAN VICE-VERSA. AT SAME TIME NIGER SUPPLEMENTS

ITS DEPENDENCE ON AIR AFRIQUE WITH ARRANGEMENTS WITH OTHER CARRIERS--I.E., AIR ALGERIE, NIGERIAN AIRWAYS, WITH OTHERS LIKE AIR PAKISTAN AND AIR LIBYA POSSIBLY STANDING IN THE WINGS. ALSO, GON SLOWLY BEGINNING TO BUILD CAPACITY OF AIR NIGER FOR INTERNAL FLIGHTS AND

INTERNATIONSL FREIGHT.

3. ACCORDING TO LOCAL I.C.A.O. REP, NIGER HAS FAIR SHARE OF INFLUENCE IN AIR AFRIQUE--THIS LARGELY DUE TO GON PERSONALITIES INVOLVED. NIGER CIVIL AVIATION DIRECTOR GOGUE, EXTREMELY COMPETENT AND WIDELY RESPECTED, IS ENTHUSIASTIC SUPPORTER OF AIR AFRIQUE. IN RECENT CONVERSATIONS WITH EMBOFF, GOGUE REFERRED TO RECENT GABON DECISION AS QUOTE FOLLY UNQUOTE, WHICH HE SAID SURE TO PUT GABON IN THE SAME BASKET AS AIR ZAIRE. EQUALLY IMPORTANT IS VOICE OF NIGER MINISTER OF TRANSPORT MOUSSA BAKO--FRENCH-TRAINED, HIGHLY QUALIFIED IN CIVIL ENGINEERING, AND EXCELLENT ADMINISTRATOR. I.C.A.O. REP SAYS BAKO'S SUPPORT FOR AIR AFRIQUE MORE PRAGMATIC--BASED ON NIGER'S LONG-TERM DEVELOPMENT NEEDS. NEITHER OF THE TWO MEN IS WARM TO GRANTING OF FIFTH FREEDOMS WITHIN AIR AFRIQUE MEMBER STATES.

4. NIGER AVIATION POLICY IS NATIONAL AND INWARD-LOOKING. COST-STUDIES HAVE DEMONSTRATED THAT AIR TRANSPORT WITHIN COUNTRY IS OFTEN CHEAPER THAN LAND TRANSPORT. GON HAS CONSCIOUSLY RETARDED EXPANSION OF NATIONAL AIRLINE UNTIL BASIC ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE COMPLETED. HOWEVER, WITH WORK BEGINNING ON NORTH-CONFIDENTIAL

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SOUTH ROAD NEXT YEAR ATTENTION NOW TURNING TO AVIATION DEVELOPMENT. NIAMEY AIRPORT RECENTLY EXPANDED TO ACCOMMODATE LARGER PASSENGER PLANES AND GON ENTERING INTO FINAL NEGOTIATIONS ON ADDING BOEING 737S TO ITS FLEET.

5. LONG-TERM AVIATION PLANNING CALLS FOR INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT AT AGADEZ. IN ADDITION TO SERVING NIGER'S URANIUM MINING REGION, GON HOPES THAT AGADEZ WILL BE VIABLE ALTERNATIVE TO NIGERIAN AIRPORTS AS REFUELLING POINT FOR INTERNATIONAL CARRIERS BETWEEN EUROPE/CENTRAL AFRICA, AND NEAR EAST/WEST AFRICA.

6. COMMENT: ON BALANCE, NIGER SEEMS BOTH FORWARD-LOOKING AND PRUDENT IN ITS AVIATION POLICIES. AT THE PRESENT, AIR AFRIQUE HAS BEEN PROGRAMMED INTO FUTURE AVIATION PLANNING. WE CONSIDER IT UNLIKELY NIGER WOULD SUPPORT BROADENING OF FIFTH FREEDOM. END COMMENT CAVISON

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